
MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Drakes Estero -- North Central Coast Project

Dear MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force Members:

I believe that shutting the Drakes Bay Oyster Farm is more environmentally insensitive than keeping it open. Locally produced food is the future, and removing the only source of oyster farming from the SF Bay Area and transporting oysters from Washington state or farther is costly in terms of energy. When one looks at the big picture, environmentalists agree that the Oyster Farm does not have a significant impact on the local environment, but the removal of it would have a significant impact on the global environment.

Our family has enjoyed visiting the oyster farm and buying locally grown oysters, and it would be a shame that this local resource is closed due to blind regulations. Oyster harvesting should be allowed in the same way that cattle ranching is allowed in Pt Reyes.

sincerely,

Mark Lakata
1788 Montecito Ave
Mountain View CA 94043

Dear MPLA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force Members,

I am writing to strongly encourage you to consider in detail the negative impact of aspects of the MLPA Initiative on Drays Bay Oyster Farm (DBOF)

My reasons and argument are simple.

1) DBOF is low impact. They have been doing business in some form for well over 50 years. While there has been some growth, the long term impact of the Oyster farm, has been clearly demonstrated, by the test of time to be low-impact. Arguments of waste, eel grass, and impact on marine mammals should be vigorously pursued, but it seems well demonstrated that to-date this impact is measurable, but quite minimal.

2) DBOF provides good stewardship and clear benefits to the local economy and environment. I make special trips to the area to enjoy a meal at nearby restaurants serving Drakes Bay oysters and would definitely reduce my visits and spending if I lost this opportunity. I am not alone. These are a unique product of high quality and to not consider the loss of this fine product on the reputation and economy of the area is short sighted.

3) Most importantly the combination of the two above arguments makes DBOF a sustainable business model. They are a small business of dedicated participants. This is the most effective form of local food production. This is a hallmark of the bay area and must be considered when implementing well-intended laws. To make an omelet some eggs must be cracked. and while I would love to pretend that the bay area is a special place intended just for me and could all return to some form of pre-Colombian wilderness, this is just not reality. Any successful protection act must consider how to best protect and preserve an area and yet provide a fertile opportunity for small business to grow in a responsible manner.

So please do find constructive ways to work with local business such as DBOF rather than pass well intended but harmful acts. I strongly believe in the value that the small responsible producers bring to the market and in my local markets see far too many examples of well intended legislation playing into the hands of big business who wants to pervert the good intentions of local actions. We can only see sustainable and vibrant local economies through well thought out constructive actions.

Best Regards,
David Klein

Claude & Carol Benedix
1710 Green Valley Road
Danville CA 94526-1510
(925)-837-8626

April 15, 2008

MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento CA 95814

Subject: Drakes Estero - North Central Coast Project

We are concerned that there is a threat to the continuation of operation of the Drakes Bay Oyster Farm by proposed legislation. Oyster production has been going on at that location for some 80 years. We have been familiar with that production for some 40 to 45 years. While in the past there may have been some concern with land based sanitation and processing, the current, new owners have materially upgraded the conditions. They are dedicated to running a truly sustainable operation without negative impacts to the marine and land environments.

We are not familiar with the extent of the MLPA Initiative and legislation, however it should not put the Drakes Bay Oyster Farm at risk since there is no use of external feeds, fertilizers, pesticides, no urban run-off or other contaminants. It is a totally sustainable operation and fills a valid food production need. It is certainly counter to the continued urban sprawl that pulls needed and valuable agricultural land out of production.

We urge that whatever restrictive legislation is proposed specifically exempt the Drakes Bay Oyster Farm from restriction of operation.

We are not related to the current or past owners of the Oyster Farm.

Sincerely,


Claude & Carol Benedix

2742 Robidoux Road
Sandy, UT 84093

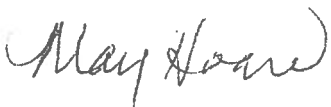
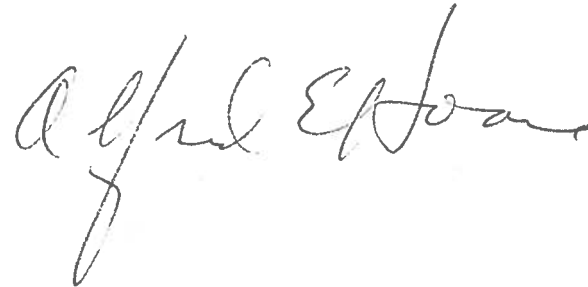
14 April, 2008

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Sacramento, CA 95814

To whom it may concern:

We are from the Bay Area and have enjoyed the Oyster Farm (Johnson's then, Drakes Bay now) for over thirty years. Even though we now live in Utah, we still make the trip at least once, sometimes twice a year. When we return to live in San Mateo two years from now, one of the things we look forward to most is the opportunity to drive up to Point Reyes, purchase a sack of live oysters, enjoy a feast at the beach, and return home all in a single day. The Oyster Farm is a treasured resource and an invaluable part of the National Seashore. It should be protected by any means possible.

Sincerely - and hopefully,

 
May and Fred Hoare

Robert E. Phelan
22 Wood Street
San Francisco, CA
94118-3412
April 14, 2008

MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth St., Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814-5509

RE: Drakes Estero - - North Central Coast Project

Dear Task Force Members:

I with my two children own a residence at 26 Cameron Street in Inverness, West Marin. The house was acquired in 1964.

I am writing with the hope that you will do nothing to terminate the oyster farming by Drakes Bay Oyster Farm.

I believe the science indicates that it adds substantially to the environmental health of the estuary and continues a historic commercial activity.

I agree with my colleagues that it would be an environmental and cultural tragedy if the Estero should be designated a "no take" zone with no concomitant benefit.

Very truly yours,



Robert E. Phelan

Douglas W. Debs
3469 Bryant St
Palo Alto, CA 94306-3543
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tel: 650-704-1487 cell
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April 15, 2008

MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Drakes Estero -- North Central Coast Project

Dear MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force Members:

It is counterproductive and just plain wrong to use the Marine Life Protection Act Initiative (MLPAI) to close down Drakes Bay Oyster Farm (DBOF).

Oyster farming has a long history in Drake's Bay and Tomales Bay. It is part of our cultural and culinary heritage. My family has been patronizing DBOF (formerly Johnson's Oysters) for over 50 years.

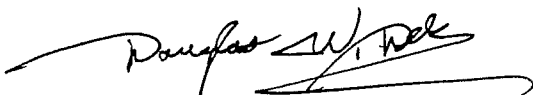
DBOF is sustainable small-scale farming. DBOF uses no feeds, fertilizers, hormones, antibiotics, tillage or pesticides. Unlike farmed salmon and other fish, which are pollute the holding pen water with non-native food and waste products, the oysters do not harm Drake's Estero. On the contrary, oysters filter the water of Drake's Estero. They help to maintain its high water quality.

The Point Reyes Peninsula is not an unspoiled wilderness like the High Sierra Wilderness Areas, where any unnecessary evidence of man's handiwork is to be avoided. The Point Reyes Peninsula has been farmed (on land) since the 1850s, and shows this. The pastures on the west side of Drake's Estero have grazing cows and barbed-wire fences. The oyster bed stakes visible at low tide are in harmony with the lightly-affected landscape of family farms and semi-wild brushy glens. It is a landscape and seascape where farming and wildlife have co-existed in balance for generations.

Therefore, DBOF is exactly the type of operation that the MLPAI should be actively supporting as a model of proper stewardship and sustainability for our coastal ecosystems.

Please allow Drakes Bay Oyster Farm to continue operation in Drake's Estero. .

Sincerely,



Elmer R. Grossman, M.D.
899 Euclid Avenue
Berkeley, California 94708-1305

April 13, 2008

MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

Regarding Drakes Estero -- North Central Coast Project

Dear MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force Members,

In 1997 the oyster company operating the Drakes Bay oyster fishery was formally given approval to upgrade the oyster farming and processing at their facility. The National Seashore officials participated in and agreed that this valuable oyster farm should continue to function as it had before and after the National Seashore was developed.

Now, the continued operation is threatened with closure. This makes no sense to me. If this was an allowable oyster farm eleven years ago, why destroy it now? I am told that continuing the farm would set an unfortunate precedent for similar operations on government controlled lands, and I recognize the force of the argument, but for the government to support the farm in 1997 and revoke its support a decade later is bad faith and bad practice.

This farm is a useful and valuable asset to the Point Reyes National Seashore. Please don't destroy it.

Sincerely,



telephone 510-526-9614 fax 510-527-8907 e-mail
elmer@grossmanfamily.com

Phyllis M. Faber
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Mill Valley, California 94941
(415) 388-6002

April 4, 2008

MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE Drake's Estero- North Central Coast Project

Dear MLPA Task Force Members,

I am writing to urge you to consider the impact and unintended onsequences of closing down the Drake's Bay Oyster Farm (DBOF)operation. Oysters have been grown and harvested in this Estero for over two hundred years. In the winter when Regional Water Quality shuts down the oyster growers in Tomales Bay, DBOF provides oyster grown in the pristine waters of the Estero to the Tomales Bay growers. Shutting down DBOF may well tip the scale so there is no further oyster industry in the area. This would be a serious and foolish loss as oysters are perhaps the most ecological harmless food source for humans and growing them is certainly a beneficial use of the Estero that harms no wildlife. People who are eating oysters are not eating fish and their cultivation enhances the quality of the bay waters for the growth of juvenile fish populations.

DBOF has become a very modern, efficient, and ecologically neutral operation that thousands of visitors come from all over to see, enjoy, and marvel at. The oyster, an animal that filters out detritus, clears the water column, enhances eel grass beds so the scarce Brandt and other migratory birds have a safe quiet place to feed. DBOF has a long term lease with DFG who regard oysters as either beneficial to the environment or benign at the very least. They can in fact be regarded as an ecological asset.

The MLPA legislation did not envision taking out an industry that in the long run reduces pressure on fish populations and enhances the environment for juvenile fish populations and migratory birds. I urge you to use common sense and leave TBOF to carry on as a modern very green operation. The political storm should be disregarded and common sense prevail. Thank you for that.

Sincerely,

Phyllis M Faber

GEORGE H CLYDE JR

**P.O. Box 861
Marshall, CA 94940
Phone: (415) 663-8632
Email: gclyde@well.com**

April 6, 2008

MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Resolving the Drakes Estero Oyster Farming Controversy Through the MLPA Process

Dear Blue Ribbon Task Force Members:

I applaud the legislation and process by which the MLPA Initiative is being implemented in the North Central area. It will result in real protection of our resources and our ability to use and enjoy them for many generations.

However, in the case of Drakes Estero, it would be inappropriate to use the MLPA process to settle the ongoing dispute regarding oyster farming and the future of Drakes Bay Oyster Company after 2012.

As you are no doubt aware, there is already in place a very serious controversy, initiated by the National Park Service and the Point Reyes National Seashore, regarding the future of oyster farming in the area. The issue has been fully joined at various levels, as it represents a very serious issue for farmers, environmentalists, consumers and local commerce. Most likely it will be resolved through a political process, informed by scientific evidence and a balance of the needs for that particular and unique resource, including historic and cultural values as well as environmental concerns.

But the MLPA process, where the uses of various resources in the region are balanced against each other to produce an optimum overall result, simply does not work where there is a single resource that is not adequately represented through the stakeholder process, where some resources and uses are effectively "traded" for others. That is the case of Drakes Estero, a high profile resource that is easily targeted, with no real "stakeholders" to defend its historic use for oyster farming.



Gordon Bennett
40 Sunnyside Dr, Inverness CA 94937
415-663-1881
gbatmuirb@aol.com

April 17, 2008

Mayor Susan Golding, Chair, MLPA Initiative and Blue Ribbon Task Force
c/o California Resources Agency , 1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1311, Sacramento, CA 95814
MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov

Re Drakes Bay Oyster Farm's (DBOF) concern *"If Drakes Estero becomes designated a "no take" zone within a Marine Protected Area."*

Dear Task Force Members:

The Drakes Bay Oyster Farm's concern has no basis in fact or law. The proposed change in the Drakes Estero from a Marine Conservation Area (where only oysters are allowed to be harvested) to a Marine Reserve (no take) does not affect the oyster company at all. The MLPA process, which we support, honors existing contractual rights. No one has any intention of using the MLPA process to shut down DBOF.

DBOF is simply attempting to interject an issue that has no place in the MLPA process. The MLPA stakeholders have heard testimony that the DBOF's right to operate in the Point Reyes National Seashore's Phillip Burton Wilderness expires in 2012. DBOF disputes this termination date. None of this dispute is relevant to the Estero's Marine Reserve designation.

Even if the 2012 date is correct, as we believe, then the conversion to a Reserve in 2012 would be the result, not the cause, of the scheduled expiration of DBOF's right to operate. Thus there would be no conflict between the MLPA designation and the operation of the oyster farm.

On the other hand, if the oyster farm succeeded in busting the Wilderness Act so that it could operate past 2012, then the Marine Reserve would still not apply until after the oyster operation's new rights expire, whenever that might be. So again in this situation there is no conflict between the MLPA designation and the operation of the oyster farm.

Thus regardless of which side of the 2012 controversy you are on, there is absolutely no conflict between the MLPA designation and the operation of the oyster farm whatsoever. The Sierra Club has no problem with simply coming to the DFG Commission after the oyster's right to operate ceases, whenever that may be, and requesting that the Commission convert the Estero status from a Conservation Area to a Marine Reserve.

There is absolutely no reason for the MLPA process to get entangled in the controversy over how federal law applies to oyster operations in Drakes Estero or to debate DBOF's long list of unsubstantiated claims and accusations of fraud. The MLPA has more than enough legitimate disputes within its mandate to work through. We urge the MLPA stakeholders to proceed with their deliberations and put aside this Drakes Estero controversy as outside the MLPA process.

Sincerely,

Sierra Club Marin Group Conservation Chair